

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Media Release

## ***This Foster Care & Kinship Week, Bishop Brian Mascord, Bishop of Wollongong, renews call for foster carers***

**Wollongong – 12 September 2024** – This Foster Care & Kinship Week (8<sup>th</sup>–15<sup>th</sup> September), Bishop Brian Mascord, Bishop of Wollongong, has developed a Bishop's Call video to urge parishioners within the Diocese of Wollongong to consider becoming foster carers amid a critical shortage of foster carers within the local community. The video was developed in partnership with CatholicCare Wollongong, part of the Diocese of Wollongong's Pastoral Works.

In NSW, there are more than 350 children who are in desperate need of a foster placement. These children and young people are missing out on enjoying a happy, stable childhood. In the Bishop's Call video, Bishop Brian shares the story of a young boy named Ollie\*. Ollie is an 11-year-old boy who first entered the foster care system in 2012. Since his long-term placement with carers broke down in January 2022, he has lived in temporary, high-cost emergency placements, primarily within an AirBnB hotel type accommodation, and is being cared for by a rotating roster of youth workers.

"Think about what your greatest concern was at 11 years old—perhaps it was your schooling? Or who your best friend was? Or how you might spend the holidays? For Ollie, his days are filled with other questions: where will I be sleeping tonight? And who will be there to care for me? Ollie, and many children like him, deserve better. They are not a problem to be solved, but, rather, a person to be loved," says Bishop Brian in the Bishop's Call video.

"CatholicCare Wollongong is extremely grateful to Bishop Brian for raising the critical need for foster carers across the Diocese of Wollongong. Seeking carers for the children and young people in our community is the top priority for CatholicCare. Since Bishop Brian first raised this issue three months ago in the Diocese, CatholicCare received 15 enquiries from parishioners who have taken up the call to enquire," said Michelle Ferrara, Executive Manager of Children & Youth Services, CatholicCare Wollongong.

"CatholicCare provides training, financial and emotional support to ensure that we are supporting our carers and the children every step of the way. We are thankful to all of our foster carers for their ongoing commitment to caring for children," said Michelle.

Bishop Brian's Foster Care Call can be viewed [here](#).

If you or somebody you know are in the Diocese of Wollongong and are interested in becoming Ollie's foster carer, or other children like Ollie, please call CatholicCare on 0418 783 956 or email [fosteringfutures@catholiccare.dow.org.au](mailto:fosteringfutures@catholiccare.dow.org.au).

For further information about CatholicCare Wollongong's foster care program, visit <https://www.catholiccare.dow.org.au/services-and-programs/family/foster-care/>

*\*Name changed for privacy.*

### **About Catholic Diocese of Wollongong:**

The Catholic Diocese of Wollongong is a vibrant, diverse community of 191,000 baptised Catholics, led by Bishop Brian Mascord, across the Illawarra, Macarthur, Shoalhaven, and Southern Highlands regions of NSW, Australia. Committed to knowing, loving, and serving

Jesus Christ through Baptism and the Holy Spirit, our mission is to foster a communion of parish, school, welfare, and religious communities that equip the faithful to carry out Christ's mission in the world. Established in 1952, the diocese is rooted in the 2,000-year tradition of the Church, handed down through an unbroken line of popes from St Peter to Pope Francis, uniting us as bearers of Christ's love.

**About CatholicCare Wollongong:**

CatholicCare is the social services agency of the Catholic Diocese of Wollongong, covering the Illawarra, Shoalhaven, Macarthur and Southern Highlands Regions. We work with the whole community, supporting people to have positive relationships and connected lives, achieve the dignity of self-reliance, and realise their full human potential. We advocate for social equality and prioritise the needs of the most vulnerable. CatholicCare is an inclusive organisation committed to helping anyone in need regardless of religious beliefs.

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